PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSACTIONS.

I. *A Letter from* William Herſchel, *Eſq. F. R. S.*

TO SIR JOSEPH BANKS, BART. P. R. S.

SIR,

BY the obſervations of the moſt eminent Aſtronomers in Europe it appears, that the new ſtar, which I had the honour of pointing out to them in March, 1781, is a Primary Planet of our Solar Syſtem. A body ſo nearly related to us by its ſimilar condition and ſituation, in the unbounded expanſe of the ſtarry heavens, muſt often be the ſubject of the converſation, not only of aſtronomers, but of every lover of ſcience in general. This conſideration then makes it neceſſary to give it a name, whereby it may be diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the planets and fixed ſtars.

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In the fabulous ages of ancient times the appellations of Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, were given to the Planets, as being the names of their principal heroes and divinities*. In the preſent more philoſophical æra, it would hardly be allowable to have recourſe to the ſame method, and call on Juno, Pallas, Apollo, or Minerva, for a name to our new heavenly body. The firſt conſideration in any particular event, or remarkable incident, ſeems to be its chronology: if in any future age it ſhould be aſked, *when* this laſt-found Planet was diſcovered? It would be a very ſatisfactory anſwer to ſay, "In the Reign of King George the Third." As a philoſopher then, the name of GEORGIUM SIDUS preſents itſelf to me, as an appellation which will conveniently convey the information of the time and country where and when it was brought to view. But as a ſubject of the beſt of Kings, who is the liberal protector of every art and ſcience;—as a native of the country from whence this Illuſtrious Family was called to the Britiſh throne;—as a member of that Society, which flouriſhes by the diſtinguiſhed liberality of its Royal Patron;—and, laſt of all, as a perſon now more immediately under the protection of this excellent Monarch, and owing every thing to His unlimited bounty;—I cannot but wiſh to take this opportunity of expreſſing my ſenſe of gratitude, by giving the name Georgium Sidus,

Georgium Sidus
——*jam nunc aſſueſce vocari.* VIRG. Georg.

to a ſtar, which (with reſpect to us) firſt began to ſhine under His auſpicious reign.

* M. DE LA LANDE's Aſt. § 639.

By

By addreſſing this letter to you, SIR, as Preſident of the Royal Society, I take the moſt effectual method of communicating that name to the Literati of Europe, which I hope they will receive with pleaſure. I have the honour to be, with the greateſt reſpect,

SIR,

Your moſt humble

and moſt obedient ſervant,

W. HERSCHEL.